

Stop Worrying and Start Living

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Humans are unaware of the deleterious effects that excessive worrying can cause to their lives. In their panic to conquer more heights, they completely ignore the fact that in the long run, a life without worries is one of the greatest blessings that a person can possess. The present article is an attempt to understand more about worrying and how worrying can be a potential threat towards healthy living. It also deals with a book review of "How to Stop worrying and Start Living" by Dale Carnegie one of the renowned writers in public speaking.

What is Worrying?

Worry refers to the thoughts, images and emotions of a negative nature in which mental attempts are made to avoid anticipated potential threats.

What Happens With Excessive Worrying?

With excessive worrying, our mind and body go into overdrive as we constantly focus on "what might happen." Chronic worrying can affect our daily life so much that it may interfere with our appetite, lifestyle habits, relationships, sleep, and job performance. Many people who worry excessively are so anxiety-ridden that they seek relief in harmful lifestyle habits such as overeating, cigarette smoking, or using alcohol and drugs.

Can Excessive Worry and Anxiety Cause a Stress Response?

Stress comes from the demands and pressures we experience each day. Long queues we experience at various places, rush hour traffic, a phone ringing nonstop, or a chronic illness are all examples of things that can cause stress on a daily basis. When worries and anxiety become excessive, we trigger the stress response. There are two elements to the stress response. The first is the perception of the challenge. The second is an automatic physiological reaction called the "fight or flight" response that brings on a surge of adrenaline and sets our body on red alert.

Can Excessive Worry Make Us Physically Ill?

Chronic worry and emotional stress can cause a host of health problems. The problem occurs when fight or flight is triggered daily by excessive worrying and anxiety. The fight or flight response causes the body's sympathetic nervous system to release stress hormones such as cortisol. These hormones can boost blood sugar levels and triglycerides (blood fats) that can be used by the body for fuel. The hormones also cause physical reactions such as:

- Difficulty in swallowing
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Fast heartbeat
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Inability to concentrate
- Irritability
- Muscle aches
- Muscle tension
- Nausea
- Nervous energy
- Rapid breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Trembling and twitching

When the excessive fuel in the blood is not used for physical activities, the chronic anxiety and outpouring of stress hormones can have serious physical consequences, including:

- Suppression of the immune system
- Digestive disorders
- Muscle tension
- Short-term memory loss
- Premature coronary artery disease
- Heart attack

If excessive worrying and high anxiety go untreated, they can lead to depression and even suicidal thoughts.

Whether or not we become ill depends on how we handle stress. Physical responses to stress involve our immune system, our heart and blood vessels, and how certain glands in our body secrete hormones. These hormones help to regulate various functions in our body, such as brain function and nerve impulses.

All of these systems interact and are profoundly influenced by our coping style and psychological state. It is not the stress that makes us ill. Rather, it is the effect of interaction of responses such as excessive worrying and anxiety on our various physiological systems that causes physical illness.

What Lifestyle Changes Might Help Excessive Worriers?

Although excessive worrying and high anxiety can cause an imbalance in our body, there are many options that can re-establish harmony of mind, body, and spirit.

- **Talk to your doctor.** Start by talking with primary care physician. Get a thorough physical exam to make sure other health problems are not fuelling our feelings of anxiety. Your doctor may prescribe medication such as anti-anxiety drugs or antidepressants to help you manage anxiety and excessive worry.

- **Exercise daily.** With your doctor's approval, begin a regular exercise program. Without question, the chemicals produced during moderate exercise can be extremely beneficial in terms of enhancing the function of the immune system. Regular aerobic and strengthening exercise is also a very effective way to train our body to deal with stress under controlled circumstances.
- **Eat a healthy, balanced diet.** Stress and worrying provoke some people to eat too little, others too much, or to eat unhealthy foods. Keep your health in mind when worrying nudges you toward the fridge.
- **Drink caffeine in moderation.** Caffeine stimulates the nervous system, which can trigger adrenaline and make us feel nervous and jittery.
- **Be conscious of your worries.** Set aside 15 minutes each day where you allow yourself to focus on problems and fears -- and then vow to let them go after the 15 minutes is up. Do whatever you can to remind yourself to stop dwelling on worries.
- **Learn to relax.** Relaxation techniques can trigger the relaxation response -- a physiological state characterized by a feeling of warmth and quiet mental alertness. This is the opposite of the "fight or flight" response. Relaxation techniques can offer a real potential to reduce anxiety and worries. They can also increase our ability to self-manage stress. With relaxation, blood flow to the brain increases and brain waves shift from an alert, beta rhythm to a relaxed, alpha rhythm. Practiced regularly, relaxation techniques can counteract the debilitating effects of stress. Common relaxation techniques include deep abdominal breathing, meditation, listening to calming music, and activities like yoga.
- **Meditate.** Daily meditation -- instead of worrying -- may help us move beyond negative thoughts and allow us to become "unstuck" from worries that keep our body on high alert. With meditation, we purposefully pay attention to what is happening at the present moment without thinking of the past or future. Meditation decreases hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which are released during the "fight or flight" or stress response.
- **Have a strong social network.** Chronic feelings of loneliness or social isolation are hindrances to effective management of stress. People who are happily married and/or have large networks of friends not only have greater life expectancies compared with those people who do not, but they also have fewer incidences about all types of disease.
- **Talk to a professional therapist.** Psychological counseling can help us develop appropriate coping strategies to deal with issues that trigger excessive worrying. Psychological intervention can give coping methods that we can use either within or outside other treatment programs. The therapist will help us identify what types of thoughts and beliefs cause the anxiety and then work with us to reduce them. Therapy is only successful if we work on getting better.

Fundamental Facts You Should Know About Worry

1. Live in "Day-tight Compartments"
2. How to face trouble
3. Prepare to accept the worst
4. Keep calm and try to make it the best
5. Remind yourself of the exorbitant price you can pay for worry in terms of your health

Basic Techniques in Analyzing Worry

1. Get all the facts
2. Weigh all the facts - then come to a decision
3. Once a decision is reached, act!
4. Write out and answer the following questions
 - What is the problem?
 - What are the causes of the problem?
 - What are the possible solutions?
 - What is the best possible solution?

How to Break the Worry Habit Before It Breaks You

1. Keep busy
2. Don't fuss about trifles
3. Use the law of averages to outlaw your worries
4. Cooperate with the Inevitable
5. Decide just how much anxiety a thing may be worth and refuse to give it more
6. Don't worry about the past

Seven Ways to Cultivate A Mental Attitude That Will Bring You Peace and Happiness

1. Fill your mind with thoughts of peace, courage, health, and hope
2. Never try to get even with your enemies
3. Expect ingratitude
4. Count your blessings, not your troubles
5. Find Yourself and Be Yourself (Remember There Is No One Else on Earth Like You)
6. Try to profit from your losses
7. Create happiness for others

The Perfect Way to Conquer Worry

1. Pray

How to Keep From Worrying About Criticism

1. Remember that unjust criticism is often a disguised compliment
2. Do the very best you can

3. Analyze your own mistakes and criticize yourself

Six Ways to Prevent Fatigue and Worry and Keep Your Energy and Spirits High

1. Rest before you get tired
2. Learn to relax at your work
3. Protect your health and appearance by relaxing at home
4. Four Good Working Habits That Will Help Prevent Fatigue and Worry
 - Clear your desk of all the papers except those relating to the immediate problem at hand
 - Do things in the order of their importance
 - When you face a problem, solve it then and there if you have the facts necessary to make a decision
 - Learn to organize, deputize, and supervise
5. Put enthusiasm into your work
6. Don't worry about insomnia

It has been found from research that people who spent money more on experiences in life are happier than those who spend money on things. So, let us be wise to choose a life far from worries.